

Proximate Nutritional Composition of Ceylon Cinnamon (*Cinnamomum zeylanicum* Blume) Leaves in Different Agro-Ecological Regions in Sri Lanka

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Cinnamon is one of the oldest renowned spices that belong to the genus of *Cinnamomum* of the Laurel family (*Lauraceae*). Ceylon cinnamon (*Cinnamomum zeylanicum* Blume) is designated globally as the true cinnamon due to its distinct characteristics among the other substitutive cinnamon; especially differentiate from cassia, the Cassia cinnamon. The taste and aromatic characteristics of cinnamon drastically vary with the origin and their nativity. Although substantial number of studies were done on identifying the health benefits of the Ceylon cinnamon bark, there is a wider hiatus in studies on the nutritional and physiological characteristics of its leaves. Therefore, the present study attempted to fill this knowledge gap and suggest an approach to utilize Ceylon cinnamon leaves in an economical way by identifying the proximate nutrition composition, which are different according to the ecological regions in Sri Lanka. Cinnamon leaf samples at two maturity levels namely, semi-matured and matured, were collected from five different agro-ecological regions based on the distribution of cinnamon cultivation in Sri Lanka. The crude fat content, protein, ash content, and mineral composition of the leaf samples were analyzed. The results showed that, at an average, the leaf samples contained of 12.5 % moisture, 7.63 % crude protein, 2.28 % crude fat, and 15.36 % of ash. The crude protein and ash contents showed a marginally higher values in the matured leaf samples compared to those of the semi-matured leaves ($P>0.05$). However, the fat content in mature leaves showed significantly higher value ($P<0.05$) compare to the semi-matured leaves. Therefore, semi-matured cinnamon leaves could be used to develop food-grade products for human consumption.

Keywords: Ceylon cinnamon, Cinnamon leaves, Cinnamon consumption, Nutritional composition